



United States Mission to the OSCE

PREVENTION OF AGGRESSIVE NATIONALISM, CHAUVINISM AND ETHNIC CLEANSING

**Statement of Mr. Ronald McNamara
U.S. Delegation to the OSCE Implementation Meeting
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When we hear the words “aggressive nationalism” and “ethnic cleansing,” our minds are typically drawn back to those dark days in the 1990s when the Milosevic regime touched off a series of wars in the Balkans that subjected millions to forced displacement, mass execution, systematic rape and torture.

Those days are gone, thanks to democratic governments throughout the region and sustained international attention. Much work remains to be done, however, including the replacement of aggressive nationalism with democracy and human rights, and the safe return of all displaced persons.

What can be done to speed the region’s recovery and perhaps set some examples allowing OSCE States to respond more effectively to aggressive nationalism and ethnic cleansing elsewhere?

First, war criminals must face their due, and their acts must be completely disavowed and condemned. In particular, the United States calls for the apprehension and transfer to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia all persons indicted by that tribunal, particularly Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. This step would not only remove an impediment to reform and bring to justice the perpetrators of criminal activity in the region, but it would also dissolve one more obstacle to integration in other European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. The authorities in Serbia and Montenegro and in the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina therefore have both a responsibility and an interest to resolve this longstanding issue completely. Some progress has been made in increasing cooperation with the ICTY and we commend authorities in Serbia and Bosnia for building up their capacity to hold domestic war crimes trials. These efforts are a clear step in the right direction.

Second, to redress the tragedy of ethnic cleansing, the right of return must be ensured for those who desire to return to their former homes. Rates of return have increased dramatically in Bosnia and Herzegovina in recent years, and we hope the efforts of the OSCE Mission there, with its focus on education reform, will help returning minority populations better integrate into their original towns and villages. We urge local officials to support these initiatives and other efforts to restore multi-ethnic society. We hope that progress on the legislative and administrative framework for return to Croatia will be matched by increased practical implementation.

As we will note on Friday during the session on migration, the situation in Kosovo is of concern, as extremists attempt to thwart the return of those who remain displaced. The numbers of returns to Kosovo continue to increase each year, but the job is not done, and needs continued attention. We have joined others in the international community in condemning the violent incidents directed

against ethnic Serbs in Kosovo in August and early September. Violence and hatred cannot be tolerated. Such actions further demonstrate the pursuit by some of an ethnically pure region, exactly the ideology that led to the flight of Kosovar Albanians in the first place.

Finally, the international community must learn from its mistakes. When aggressive nationalism surfaced in southeastern Europe, many felt it could be checked by reasoned arguments, rather than credible warnings. When aggressive nationalism turned to ethnic cleansing, excuses were found not to act swiftly and decisively. Early warnings, like those provided by the High Commissioner for National Minorities, were not sufficiently heeded. More damage was done as a result, and the task of recovery was made more difficult.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, my government notes with concern recent, destabilizing acts of violence in Macedonia and southern Serbia. We view these acts as the work of small, isolated groups scheming to maintain a good environment for their criminal activity. We hope the region's elected leaders will do the right thing and respond appropriately. Having witnessed so much violence inspired by aggressive nationalism already, no country in the region should want to see widespread violence resume.